A PERSUASIVE TO Frequent Communion IN THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE Lord's Supper.

The Third Edition.

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A PERSUASIVE TO FREQUENT COMMUNION.

MY deſign in this Argument, is from the Conſideration of the Nature of this Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, and of the perpetual Uſe of it to the end of the World, to awaken Men to a ſenſe of their Duty, and the great Obligation which lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make men ſenſible of their Duty in this particular, becauſe in this laſt Age by the unwary Diſcourſes of ſome, concerning the Nature of this Sacrament, and the danger of receiving it unworthily, ſuch doubts and fears have been raiſed in the

minds of Men as utterly to deter many, and in a great meaſure to diſcourage almoſt the generality of Chriſtians from the uſe of it; to the great prejudice and danger of Mens Souls, and the viſible abatement of Piety by the groſs neglect of ſo excellent a means of our growth and improvement in it; and to the mighty ſcandal of our Religion, by the general diſuſe and contempt of ſo plain and ſolemn an Inſtitution of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I ſhall take occaſion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of theſe *four* Points.

Firſt, Of the *Perpetuity* of this Inſtitution; this the Apoſtle ſignifies when he ſaith, that *by eating this*
1 Cor. 11. 26. *Bread, and drinking this Cup, we do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the *Obligation* that lies upon all Chriſtians to a frequent obſervance of this Inſtitution; this is ſignified in that Expreſſion of the Apoſtle, *As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup:* which Expreſſion conſidered and compared together with the practice of the Primitive Church, does imply an Obligation upon Chriſtians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfie the *Objections* and Scruples which have been raiſed in the Minds of Men, and particularly of many devout and ſincere Chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from their receiving this Sacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought: which Objections are chiefly grounded upon
1 Cor. 11. 27. what the Apoſtle ſays, *Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guil-*

is guilty of the Body and Bloud of the Lord: and *doth eat and drink damnation to himſelf.* Ver. 29.

Fourthly, What *Preparation* of our ſelves is neceſſary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament: which will give me occaſion to explain the Apoſtle's meaning in thoſe Words, *But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* Ver. 28.

I. For the *Perpetuity* of this Inſtitution, implyed in thoſe Words, *For as often as yet eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come*; or the Words may be read *imperatively* and by way of Precept, *ſhew ye forth the Lord's Death till he come.* In the three *verſes* immediately before, the Apoſtle particularly declares the Inſtitution of this Sacrament, with the manner and circumſtances of it, as he had received it not onely by the hands of the Apoſtles, but as the Words ſeem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himſelf, *ver.* 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo delivered unto you: that the Lord Jeſus in the ſame night that he was betrayed took Bread, and when he had given Thanks he brake it, and ſaid, Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this doe in remembrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo he took the Cup when he had ſupped, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Bloud: this doe as often as ye ſhall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Inſtitution is in theſe Words, *this doe in remembrance of me.* In which words our Lord commands his Diſciples after his Death to repeat theſe actions of *taking* and *breaking* and *eating the Bread,* and of *drinking of the Cup,* by way of ſolemn Commemoration I.

ration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once onely, or oftner; and whether by the Diſciples onely, during their lives, or by all Chriſtians afterwards in all ſucceſſive Ages of the Church, is not ſo certain merely from the force of theſe Words, *doe this in remembrance of me:* but what the Apoſtle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Inſtitution of this Sacrament was intended for all Ages of the Chriſtian Church; *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come:* that is, untill the time of his ſecond coming, which will be at the end of the World. So that this Sacrament was deſigned to be a ſtanding Commemoration of the Death and Paſſion of our Lord till he ſhould come to Judgment; and conſequently the Obligation that lies upon Chriſtians to the obſervation of it is perpetual, and ſhall never ceaſe to the end of the World.

So that it is a vain conceit and mere dream of the *Enthuſiaſts* concerning the *ſeculum Spiritûs Sancti, the Age* and diſpenſation *of the Holy Ghoſt*, when, as they ſuppoſe, all humane Teaching ſhall ceaſe, and all external Ordinances and Inſtitutions in Religion ſhall vaniſh, and there ſhall be no farther uſe of them. Whereas it is very plain from the *new Teſtament* that Prayer, and outward Teaching, and the Uſe of the two Sacraments, were intended to continue among Chriſtians in all Ages. As for *Prayer*, (beſides our natural Obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed Religion) we are by our Saviour particularly exhorted to *watch and pray*, with regard to the day of Judgment, and in conſideration of the uncertainty of the time when it ſhall be: And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Chriſtians till the day of Judgment, becauſe it is preſcribed as one of the beſt ways of Prepa-

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ration for it. That *outward Teaching* likewiſe and *Baptiſm* were intended to be perpetual is no leſs plain, becauſe Chriſt hath expreſly promiſed to be with the Teachers of his Church in the uſe of theſe Ordinances to the end of the World, *Matth.* 28. 19, 20. *Go and diſciple all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: and lo I am with you always to the end of the World.* Not onely to the end of that particular Age, but to the end of the Goſpel Age, and the conſummation of all Ages, as the Phraſe clearly imports. And it is as plain from this *Text*, that the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* was intended for a perpetual Inſtitution in the Chriſtian Church, till the ſecond coming of Chriſt, *viz.* his coming to Judgment: Becauſe St. *Paul* tells us, that by theſe Sacramental Signs the Death of Chriſt is to be repreſented and commemorated till he comes. *Doe this in remembrance of me: For as oft as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come.*

And if this be the End and Uſe of this Sacrament, to be a ſolemn remembrance of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord during his abſence from us, that is, till his coming to Judgment, then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the ſecond coming of our Lord. The conſideration whereof ſhould mightily ſtrengthen and encourage our Faith in the hope of Eternal Life ſo often as we partake of this Sacrament: ſince our Lord hath left it to us as a memorial of himſelf till he come to tranſlate his Church into Heaven, and as a ſure pledge that he will come again at the end of the World and inveſt us in that Glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we ſhould comfort our ſelves with the thoughts of that bleſſed time when we ſhall

eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and ſhall be admitted to the great Feaſt of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God the Judge of all, and with our bleſſed and glorified Redeemer and the holy Angels and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect.

And the ſame conſideration ſhould likewiſe make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due Preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives. Becauſe of that dreadfull Sentence of condemnation which at the ſecond coming of our Lord ſhall be paſt upon thoſe, who by the profanation of this ſolemn Inſtitution trample under foot the Son of God, and contemn the bloud of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which God hath ratified with Mankind by the bloud of his Son. The *Apoſtle* tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Bloud of the Lord*, and *eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf*. This indeed is ſpoken of temporal Judgment (as I ſhall ſhew in the latter part of this Diſcourſe,) but the *Apoſtle* likewiſe ſuppoſeth, that if theſe temporal Judgments had not their effect to bring men to Repentance, but they ſtill perſiſted in the Profanation of this holy Sacrament, they ſhould at laſt *be condemned with the World*. For as he that partaketh worthily of this Sacrament confirms his intereſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel, and his Title to eternal Life; ſo he that receives this Sacrament unworthily, that is without due Reverence, and without fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in ſin whilſt he commemorates the Death of Chriſt, *who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, this man aggravates and ſeals his own Damnation, becauſe he is guilty of the Body and Bloud of Chriſt, not onely by the contempt of it, but by renewing in ſome ſort the cauſe of

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his ſufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himſelf afreſh the Lord of life and glory, and putting him to an open ſhame.* And when the great Judge of the world ſhall appear and paſs final Sentence upon men, ſuch obſtinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the deareſt love of their dying Lord, nor be engaged to leave their ſins by all the tyes and obligations of this holy Sacrament, ſhall have their portion with *Pilate* and *Judas*, with the *chief Prieſts* and *Souldiers*, who were the betrayers and murtherers of the Lord of life and glory; and ſhall be dealt withall as thoſe who are in ſome ſort *guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord.* Which ſevere threatning ought not to diſcourage men from the Sacrament, but to deter all thoſe from their ſins who think of engaging themſelves to God by ſo ſolemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means a ſufficient Reaſon to make men to fly from the Sacrament, but certainly one of the moſt powerfull Arguments in the world to make men forſake their ſins; as I ſhall ſhew more fully under the *third* head of this Diſcourſe.

II. The *Obligation* that lyes upon all Chriſtians to the frequent obſervance and practice of this Inſtitution. For though it be not neceſſarily implyed in theſe Words, *as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*; yet if we compare theſe words of the *Apoſtle* with the uſage and practice of Chriſtians at that Time, which was to communicate in this holy Sacrament ſo often as they ſolemnly met together to worſhip God, they plainly ſuppoſe and recommend to us the frequent uſe of this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon Chriſtians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the ſenſe and meaning of any Law or Inſtitu- II.

tion is beſt underſtood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince men of their obligation hereunto, and to ingage them to a ſutable practice, I ſhall now endeavour with all the plainneſs and force of perſuaſion I can: And ſo much the more, becauſe the neglect of it among Chriſtians is grown ſo general, and a great many perſons from a ſuperſtitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I ſhall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Chriſtians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament; each of them ſufficient of it ſelf, but all of them together of the greateſt force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of *indiſpenſable duty*, and in obedience to a plain precept and moſt ſolemn inſtitution of our bleſſed Saviour that great *Lawgiver*, *who is able to ſave and to deſtroy*, as St. *James* calls him: He hath bid us *doe this*. And St. *Paul*, who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the Lord*, admoniſheth us to doe it *often*. Now for any man that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Inſtitution of *Chriſt* is utterly inconſiſtent with ſuch a profeſſion. To ſuch our Lord may ſay as he did to the *Jews*, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and doe not the things which I ſay?* How far the Ignorance of this inſtitution, or the miſtakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect is another conſideration. But after we know our Lord's will in this particular and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no cloak for our ſin. For nothing

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can excuſe the wilfull neglect of a plain Inſtitution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

2. We are likewiſe obliged hereunto in point of *Intereſt*. The benefits which we expect to be derived and aſſured to us by this Sacrament are all the bleſſings of the new Covenant, the forgiveneſs of our ſins, the grace and aſſiſtence of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform the conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well-doing, and to ſupport us under ſufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own intereſt and happineſs, we forſake our own mercies, and judge our ſelves unworthy of all the bleſſings of the Goſpel, and deprive our ſelves of one of the beſt means and advantages of confirming and conveying theſe bleſſings to us. So that if we had not a due ſenſe of our *duty*, the conſideration of our own *intereſt* ſhould oblige us not to neglect ſo excellent and ſo effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happineſs.

3. We are likewiſe particularly obliged in point of *gratitude* to the carefull obſervance of this Inſtitution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in charge when he was going to lay down his life for us, *doe this in remembrance of me*. Men uſe religiouſly to obſerve the charge of a dying friend, and, unleſs it be very difficult and unreaſonable, to doe what he deſires: But this is the charge of our beſt friend (nay of the greateſt friend and benefactour of all mankind) when he was preparing himſelf to dye in our ſtead and to offer up himſelf a ſacrifice for us; to undergo the moſt grievous

grievous pains and ſufferings for our ſakes, and to yield up himſelf to the worſt of temporal deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to doe all this for us? Can we deny him this? ſo little grievous and burthenſome in it ſelf, ſo infinitely beneficial to us? Had ſuch a friend, and in ſuch circumſtances, bid us doe ſome great thing would we not have done it? how much more when he hath onely ſaid, *doe this in remembrance of me*; when he hath onely commended to us one of the moſt natural and delightfull Actions, as a fit repreſentation and memorial of his wonderfull love to us, and of his cruel ſufferings for our ſakes; when he hath onely enjoyned us, in a thankfull commemoration of his goodneſs, to meet at his Table and to remember what he hath done for us; to look upon him whom we have piereed, and to reſolve to grieve and wound him no more? Can we without the moſt horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great friend and lover of ſouls? A command ſo reaſonable, ſo eaſie, ſo full of bleſſings and benefits to the faithfull obſervers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince men of their duty in this particular, and of the neceſſity of obſerving ſo plain an Inſtitution of our Lord; that it were no hard thing to perſuade men to their intereſt, and to be willing to partake of thoſe great and manifold bleſſings which all Chriſtians believe to be promiſed and made good to the frequent and worthy Receivers of this Sacrament. Where then lyes the difficulty? what ſhould be the cauſe of all this backwardneſs which we ſee in men to ſo plain, ſo neceſſary, and ſo beneficial a duty? The truth is, men have been greatly diſcouraged from this Sacrament by

by the unwary preſſing and inculcating of two great truths; *the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the neceſſity of a due preparation for it.* Which brings me to the

III. III. *Third* Particular I propoſed, which was to endeavour to ſatisfie the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raiſed in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and ſincere Chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from the receiving of this Sacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought. And theſe Objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apoſtle* ſays at the 27th. *verſe. Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord.* And again *ver.* 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.* Upon the miſtake and miſapplication of theſe *Texts* have been grounded *two* Objections, of great force to diſcourage men from this Sacrament, which I ſhall endeavour with all the tenderneſs and clearneſs I can to remove. *Firſt*, That the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great, it ſeems the ſafeſt way not to receive at all. *Secondly*, That ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required in order to worthy Receiving, the more timorous ſort of devout Chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an Action.

Obj. 1. I. That the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great it ſeems the ſafeſt way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament and not to receive it at all. But this Objection is evidently of no force if there be (as moſt certainly there is) as great or a greater danger on

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the other hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And ſo though the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain Inſtitution of Chriſt is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refuſed to come to the *marriage-feaſt* of the *King's Son* and *made light* of that gracious invitation were at leaſt as faulty as he who came *without a wedding garment.* And we find in the concluſion of the *Parable*, that as he was ſeverely puniſhed for his diſreſpect, ſo they were deſtroyed for their diſobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater ſign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament, than to partake of it without ſome due qualification. The greateſt indiſpoſition that can be for this holy Sacrament is one's being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue ſo, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much leſs than he ought: And ſurely it is very hard for men to come to ſo ſolemn an Ordinance without ſome kind of religious awe upon their ſpirits, and without ſome good thoughts and reſolutions, at leaſt for the preſent. If a man that lives in any known wickedneſs of life do before he receive the Sacrament ſet himſelf ſeriouſly to be humbled for his ſins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's grace and aſſiſtence againſt them; and after the receiving it, does continue for ſome time in theſe good reſolutions, though after a while he may poſſibly relapſe into the ſame ſins again; this is ſome kind of a reſtraint to a wicked life; and theſe good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better than a conſtant and uninterrupted courſe of ſin: Even this *righteouſneſs*, which is but *as the morning cloud and the early dew which ſo ſoon paſſeth away*, is better than none.

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And indeed ſcarce any man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this conſideration be excited to ſome good purpoſes, and put upon ſome ſort of endeavour to mend and reform his life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of ſincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make uſe of this excellent means and inſtrument for the mortifying and ſubduing of his luſts and for the obtaining of God's grace and aſſiſtence, it may pleaſe God by the uſe of theſe means ſo to abate the force and power of his luſts, and to imprint ſuch conſiderations upon his mind in the receiving of this holy Sacrament and preparing himſelf for it, that he may at laſt break off his wicked courſe and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to thoſe who neglect this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to reſtrain them from the greateſt enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil courſe: nothing but the penalty of humane Laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men uſed to be reſtrained from great and ſcandalous vices by ſhame and fear of diſgrace, and would abſtain from many ſins out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: But men have hardened their faces in this degenerate Age, and thoſe gentle reſtraints of modeſty which governed and kept men in order heretofore ſignifie nothing now adays. Bluſhing is out of faſhion, and ſhame is ceaſed from among the children of men.

But the Sacrament did always uſe to lay ſome kind of reſtraint upon the worſt of men: and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at leaſt have ſome good effect upon them for a time: If it did not make men

good, yet it would make them reſolve to be ſo, and leave ſome good thoughts and impreſſions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad conſequence, to diſcourage men ſo much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years: And that many men who were under ſome kind of check before, ſince they have been driven away from the Sacrament have quite let looſe the reins, and proſtituted themſelves to all manner of impiety and vice. And among the many ill effects of our paſt conſuſions, this is none of the leaſt, That in many Congregations of this Kingdom Chriſtians were generally diſuſed and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it; and being ſo, they muſt neceſſarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly to abſtain from it. By which it came to paſs that in very many Places this great and ſolemn Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion was almoſt quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it; and the remembrance of Chriſt's death even loſt among Chriſtians: So that many Congregations in *England* might juſtly have taken up the complaint of the Woman at our Saviour's Sepulchre, *they have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid him.*

But ſurely men did not well conſider what they did, nor what the conſequences of it would be, when they did ſo earneſtly diſſuade men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference and concluſion from hence is not that men ſhould upon this conſideration be deterred from the Sacrament, but that they ſhould be affrighted from their ſins, and from that wicked courſe of life which is an habitual indiſpoſition and unwor-

unworthineſs. St. *Paul* indeed (as I obſerved before) truly repreſents, and very much aggravates the danger of the unworthy receiving of this Sacrament; but he did not deter the *Corinthians* from it, becauſe they had ſometimes come to it without due reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiſs and to come better prepared and diſpoſed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the Text, *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord;* he does not add, therefore let Chriſtians take heed of coming to the Sacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a ſolemn participation of the body and bloud of Chriſt; *but let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

For, if this be a good reaſon to abſtain from the Sacrament, for fear of performing ſo ſacred an action in an undue manner, it were beſt for a bad man to lay aſide all Religion and to give over the exerciſe of all the duties of Piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the Word of God; becauſe there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable uſe of any of theſe. *The prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that reſolves to continue ſo) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our *Saviour* gives us the ſame caution concerning hearing the Word of God; *take heed how ye hear.* And St. *Paul* tells us, that thoſe who are not reformed by the Doctrine of the *Goſpel*, it is *the ſavour of death*, that is deadly and damnable, to ſuch perſons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is beſt for a wicked man not to pray, not to hear or reade the Word of God, leſt by ſo doing he ſhould en-

danger and aggravate his condemnation? And yet there is as much reaſon from this conſideration, to perſuade men to give over praying and attending to God's Word as to lay aſide the uſe of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the Word of God unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great contempt of God and of our bleſſed Saviour; and by his indevout prayers and unfruitfull hearing of God's Word does further and aggravate his own damnation: I ſay, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high contempt of Chriſt, and *eats and drinks his own Judgment*; ſo that the danger of the unworthy performing this ſo ſacred an action is no otherwiſe a reaſon to any man to abſtain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to caſt off all Religion. He that unworthily uſeth or performs any part of Religion is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that caſts off all Religion plungeth himſelf into a moſt deſperate ſtate, and does certainly damn himſelf to avoid the danger of damnation: Becauſe he that caſts off all Religion throws off all the means whereby he ſhould be reclaimed and brought into a better ſtate. I cannot more fitly illuſtrate this matter than by this plain Similitude: He that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very ſhort ſpace.

There are ſome conſcientious perſons who abſtain from the Sacrament upon an apprehenſion that the ſins which they ſhall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great miſtake; our Saviour having ſo plainly declared that all manner of ſin ſhall be

be forgiven men except the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt; ſuch as was that of the *Phariſees*, who as our Saviour tells us blaſphemed the Holy Ghoſt in aſcribing thoſe great miracles which they ſaw him work, and which he really wrought by the Spirit of God, to the power of the Devil. Indeed to ſin deliberately after ſo ſolemn an engagement to the contrary is a great aggravation of ſin, but not ſuch as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to prevent theſe ſins; but, on the contrary, the conſtant receiving of it with the beſt preparation we can is one of the moſt effectual means to prevent ſin for the future, and to obtain the aſſiſtence of God's grace to that end: And if we fall into ſin afterwards, we may be renewed by repentance; *for we have an advocate with the Father Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, who is the propitiation for our ſins*; and as ſuch, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this bleſſed Sacrament of his body broken, and his bloud ſhed for the remiſſion of our ſins. Can we think that the primitive Chriſtians, who ſo frequently received this holy Sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate ſin? undoubtedly many of them did; but far be it from us to think that ſuch ſins were unpardonable, and that ſo many good men ſhould becauſe of their carefull and conſcientious obſervance of our Lord's Inſtitution unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a concluſion: ſuch groundleſs fears and jealouſies as theſe may be a ſign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a ſign of an injudicious mind. For if we ſtand upon theſe Scruples, no man perhaps was ever ſo worthily prepared to draw near to God in any duty of Religion, but there was ſtill ſome defect or other in the diſpoſition of his mind, and the degree

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of his preparation. But if we prepare our ſelves as well as we can, this is all God expects. And for our fears of falling into ſin afterwards, there is this plain anſwer to be given to it; that the danger of falling into ſin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament, but encreaſed: becauſe a powerfull and probable means of preſerving men from ſin is neglected. And why ſhould not every ſincere Chriſtian, by the receiving of this Sacrament and renewing his Covenant with God, rather hope to be confirmed in goodneſs, and to receive farther aſſiſtences of God's grace and holy Spirit to ſtrengthen him againſt ſin, and to enable him to ſubdue it; than trouble himſelf with fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no ſufficient reaſon to keep any man from the Sacrament? We cannot ſurely entertain ſo unworthy a thought of God and our bleſſed Saviour, as to imagine that he did inſtitute the Sacrament not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a ſnare, and an occaſion of our ruine and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious deſign of God, and turn the cup of Salvation into a cup of deadly poiſon to the ſouls of men.

All then that can reaſonably be inferred from the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this conſideration men ſhould be quickened to come to the Sacrament with a due preparation of mind, and ſo much the more to fortifie their reſolutions of living ſuitably to that holy Covenant which they ſolemnly renew every time they receive this holy Sacrament. This conſideration ought to convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of a good life, but not to deter us from the uſe of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned *Divine* ſays very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none but thoſe that do

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not underſtand it, but thoſe who are unwilling to be tyed to their duty and are afraid of being engaged to uſe their beſt diligence to keep the commandments of Chriſt. And ſuch perſons have no reaſon to fear being in a worſe condition, ſince they are already in ſo bad a ſtate. And thus much may ſuffice for anſwer to the *firſt Objection* concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy Sacrament. I proceed to the

2. *Second Objection*, which was this; That ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous ſort of Chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an Action. *Obj.* 2.

For a full Anſwer to this Objection, I ſhall endeavour briefly to clear theſe *three* things. *Firſt*, That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to refrain from it. *Secondly*, That a total want of a due preparation, not onely in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this Sacrament, yet it does by no means excuſe our neglect of it. *Thirdly*, That the proper inference and concluſion from the total want of a due preparation is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immediately to ſet upon the work of preparation that ſo we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out theſe *three* things I hope this Objection is fully anſwered.

1. That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to abſtain from it: For then no man ſhould ever receive it. For who is every way worthy and in all degrees and reſpects duly qualified to approach the preſence

ſence of God in any of the duties of his Worſhip and Service? Who can *waſh his hands in innocency*, that ſo he may be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? *There is not a man on earth that lives and ſins not.* The Graces of the beſt men are imperfect; and every imperfection in grace and goodneſs is an imperfection in the diſpoſition and preparation of our minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our ſins, and ſincerely reſolve to obey and perform the terms of the Goſpel and of that Covenant which we entred into by Baptiſm and are going ſolemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at leaſt in ſome degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; And the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently, that by this ſpiritual food of God's appointing, by *this living bread which comes down from heaven* our ſouls may be nouriſhed in goodneſs, and new ſtrength and vertue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our hearts and enabling us to run the ways of God's commandments with more conſtancy and delight. For the way *to grow in grace* and to be *ſtrengthned with all might in the inner man*, and to *abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs which by Chriſt Jeſus are to the praiſe and glory of God*, is with care and conſcience to uſe thoſe means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the uſe of theſe means it is to no purpoſe for us to pray to God for his grace and aſſiſtence. We may tire our ſelves with our devotions and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: Like lazy beggars that are always complaining and alway asking, but will not work, will doe nothing to help themſelves and better their condition; and therefore are never like to move the

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pity and compaſſion of others. If we expect God's grace and aſſiſtence, we muſt work out our own Salvation in the carefull uſe of all thoſe means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodneſs which men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the uſe of it. And therefore it is a prepoſterous thing for men to inſiſt upon having the end before they will uſe the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not onely in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuſe our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuſe it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuſe or extenuation of it. A total want of preparation and an abſolute unworthineſs is Impenitency in an evil courſe, a reſolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his luſts and to break off that wicked courſe he hath lived in: But is this any excuſe for the neglect of our duty that we will not fit our ſelves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to our ſelves? A father commands his ſon to ask him bleſſing every day, and is ready to give it him; but ſo long as he is undutifull to him in his other actions, and lives in open diſobedience, forbids him to come in his ſight. He excuſeth himſelf from asking his father bleſſing becauſe he is undutifull in other things, and reſolves to continue ſo. This is juſt the caſe of neglecting the duty God requires, and the bleſſings he offers to us in the Sacrament, becauſe we have made our ſelves incapable of ſo performing the one as to receive the other; and are reſolved to continue ſo.

We will not doe our duty in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the Sacrament.

3. The proper Inference and concluſion from a total want of due preparation for the Sacrament is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to ſet about the work of preparation, that ſo we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are abſolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in ſuch a manner render their condition much worſe, this is a moſt forcible Argument to repentance and amendment of life: There is nothing reaſonable in this caſe but immediately to reſolve upon a better courſe that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe holy Myſteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath againſt us by the wilfull neglect of ſo great and neceſſary a duty of the Chriſtian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, ſo long as we do wilfully refuſe to fit and qualifie our ſelves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like caſe; A Pardon is graciouſly offered to a rebel, he declines to accept it, and modeſtly excuſeth himſelf becauſe he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? becauſe he reſolves to be a rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his crime. Very true: and it will be no leſs an aggravation that he refuſeth it for ſuch a reaſon, and under a pretence of modeſty does the impudenteſt thing in the world. This is juſt the caſe; and in this caſe there is but one thing reaſonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himſelf capable of the benefit as ſoon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: But to excuſe himſelf from accepting of the benefit offered,

offered, becauſe he is not worthy of it nor fit for it, nor ever intends to be ſo, is as if a man ſhould deſire to be excuſed from being happy becauſe he is reſolved to play the fool and to be miſerable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or onely to ſome degree, it is every way unreaſonable: If it be in the degree onely, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; If it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the impediment, by making ſuch preparation as is neceſſary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. *Fourth* and laſt thing I propoſed, *viz.* What preparation of our ſelves is neceſſary in order to the worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I told you would give me occaſion to explain the *Apoſtle*'s meaning in the laſt part of the *Text*, *But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* I think it very clear from the occaſion and circumſtances of the *Apoſtle*'s diſcourſe concerning the Sacrament that he does not intend the examination of our ſtate, whether we be Chriſtians or not, and ſincerely reſolved to continue ſo; and conſequently that he does not here ſpeak of our habitual preparation by the reſolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were Chriſtians and reſolved to continue and perſevere in their Chriſtian profeſſion: But he ſpeaks of their actual fitneſs and worthineſs at that time when they came to receive the Lord's Supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we muſt conſider what it was that gave occaſion to this diſcourſe. At the 20th. *verſe* of this *Chapter* he ſharply reproves their irreverent and unſuitable carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came to it very diſ-

orderly, *one before another.* It was the cuſtome of Chriſtians to meet at their *Feaſt of Charity*, in which they did communicate with great ſobriety and temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Now among the *Corinthians* this order was broken: The rich met and excluded the poor from this common Feaſt. And after an irregular feaſt (one before another eating his own ſupper as he came) they went to the Sacrament in great diſorder; *one was hungry* having eaten nothing at all, *others were drunk*, having eaten intemperately, and the poor were deſpiſed and neglected. This the *Apoſtle* condemns as a great profanation of that ſolemn Inſtitution of the Sacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved themſelves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common ſupper or feaſt. And this he calls *not diſcerning the Lord's body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the Sacrament and a common meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls *eating and drinking unworthily:* For which he pronounceth them *guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord*, which were repreſented and commemorated in their *eating of that bread and drinking of that cup.* By which irreverent and contemptuous uſage of the body and bloud of our Lord, he tells them that they did incur the judgment of God; which he calls *eating and drinking their own judgment.* For that the word κρίμα, which our *Tranſlatours* render *damnation*, does not here ſignifie eternal condemnation, but a temporal judgment and chaſtiſement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation, is evident from what follows; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himſelf:* And then he ſays, *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep:* That is, for

for this irreverence of theirs God had ſent among them ſeveral diſeaſes, of which many had dyed. And then he adds, *For if we would judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged. If we would judge our ſelves*; whether this be meant of the publick Cenſures of the Church, or our private cenſuring of our ſelves in order to our future amendment and reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think moſt probable, then *judging* here is much the ſame with *examining our ſelves, ver.* 28. And then the *Apoſtle*'s meaning is, that if we would cenſure and examine our ſelves, ſo as to be more careful for the future, we ſhould eſcape the judgment of God in theſe temporal puniſhments. *But when we are judged, we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world. But when we are judged*; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge our ſelves we provoke God to judge us; *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world*; that is, he inflicts theſe temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal condemnation. Which plainly ſhews, that the judgment here ſpoken of, is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment:* where the *Apoſtle* plainly ſhews both what was the crime of unworthy receiving, and the puniſhment of it. Their crime was, their irreverent and diſorderly participation of the Sacrament; and their puniſhment was, thoſe temporal judgments which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to underſtand the precept of examination of our ſelves *before we eat of that bread and drink of that*

that cup. But let a man examine himſelf; that is, conſider well with himſelf what a ſacred Action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this Sacrament inſtituted by our Lord in memorial of his body and bloud, that is, of his death and paſſion: And if heretofore he have been guilty of any diſorder and irreverence (ſuch as the *Apoſtle* here taxeth them withall) let him cenſure and *judge himſelf* for it, be ſenſible of and ſorry for his fault, and be careſull to avoid it for the future; and having thus *examined himſelf, let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* This, I think, is the plain ſenſe of the *Apoſtle's* Diſcourſe; and that if we attend to the ſcope and circumſtances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But ſome will ſay, Is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence and diſorder in the celebration of it? I anſwer in ſhort, this was the particular unworthineſs with which the *Apoſtle* taxeth the *Corinthians*; and which he warns them to amend, as they deſire to eſcape the judgments of God, ſuch as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, ſo unſuitable to the holy Sacrament: He finds no other fault with them at preſent in this matter, though any other ſort of irreverence will proportionably expoſe men to the like puniſhment. He ſays nothing here of their habitual preparation, by the ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of a good life anſwerable to the rules of the Chriſtian Religion: This we may ſuppoſe he took for granted. However, it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other religious duty. Not but that it is very true that none but thoſe who do heartily embrace the Chriſtian Religion

gion and are ſincerely reſolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this ſolemn acknowledgment and profeſſion of it. So that it is a practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, becauſe it is of great uſe, for Chriſtians by way of preparation for the Sacrament to examine themſelves in a larger ſenſe than in all probability the *Apoſtle* here intended: I mean, to examine our paſt lives and the actions of them in order to a ſincere repentance of all our errours and miſcarriages, and to fix us in the ſteady purpoſe and reſolution of a better life: particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveneſs of our ſins ſealed to us, we ſhould lay aſide all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive thoſe that have offended us, and put in practice that univerſal love and charity which is repreſented to us by this holy Communion. And to this purpoſe we are earneſtly exhorted in the publick *Office* of the *Communion* by way of due preparation and diſpoſition for it, to *repent us truly of our ſins paſt, to amend our lives and to be in perfect charity with all men, that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe holy myſteries.*

And becauſe this work of examining our ſelves concerning our ſtate and condition, and of exerciſing repentance towards God and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are Chriſtians, and can never be put in practice more ſeaſonably and with greater advantage than when we are meditating of this Sacrament, therefore beſides our habitual preparation by repentance and the conſtant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable cuſtome in Chriſtians before their coming to the Sacrament to ſet apart ſome particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every perſon ſhould allot to this purpoſe,

purpoſe, is matter of prudence; and as it need not, ſo neither indeed can it be preciſely determined. Some have greater reaſon to ſpend more time upon this work, than others; I mean thoſe whoſe accounts are heavier becauſe they have long run upon the ſcore and neglected themſelves: And ſome alſo have more leiſure and freedom for it, by reaſon of their eaſie condition and circumſtances in the world; and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of time for the exerciſes of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to doe a work of ſo great moment and concernment ſlightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining our ſelves is to underſtand our ſtate and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiſs in our ſelves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumſtances of the means are leſs conſiderable: whether more or leſs time be allowed to this work it matters not ſo much, as to make ſure that the work be throughly done.

And I do on purpoſe ſpeak thus cautiouſly in this matter, becauſe ſome pious perſons do perhaps err on the ſtricter hand, and are a little ſuperſtitious on that ſide; inſomuch that unleſs they can gain ſo much time to ſet apart for a ſolemn preparation, they will refrain from the Sacrament at that time, though otherwiſe they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the *Apoſtle* ſays in another caſe about the Sacrament, *ſhall I praiſe them in this? I praiſe them not.* For, provided there be no wilfull neglect of due preparation, it is much better to come ſo prepared as we can, nay I think it is our duty ſo to doe, rather than to abſtain upon this *punctilio*. For when all is done, the beſt preparation for the Sacrament is the general care and endeavour of a good life:

life: And he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular foreſight of that opportunity. And I think in that caſe ſuch a one ſhall do much better to receive than to refrain; becauſe he is habitually prepared for the Sacrament, though he had no time to make ſuch actual preparation as he deſired. And if this were not allowable how could Miniſters communicate with ſick perſons at all times, or perſuade others to do it many times upon very ſhort and ſudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the primitive Chriſtians, who received the Sacrament ſo frequently that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as eſſential and neceſſary a part of their publick worſhip as any other part of it whatſoever, even as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and interpreting the Word of God: I ſay, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it ſo conſtantly, could allot any more time for a ſolemn preparation for it, than they did for any other part of divine worſhip: And conſequently, that the *Apoſtle* when he bids the *Corinthians* examine themſelves could mean no more than that conſidering the nature and ends of this Inſtitution they ſhould come to it with great reverence; and reflecting upon their former miſcarriages in this matter, ſhould be carefull upon this admonition to avoid them for the future and to amend what had been amiſs: which to do, requires rather reſolution and care than any long time of preparation.

I ſpeak this, that devout perſons may not be entangled in an apprehenſion of a greater neceſſity than really there is of a long and ſolemn preparation every time they receive the Sacrament. The great neceſſity that lies upon men is to live as becomes Chriſtians, and then they can never be abſolutely unprepared.

Nay, I think this to be a very good preparation; and I ſee not why men ſhould not be very well ſatisfied with it, unleſs they intend to make the ſame uſe of the Sacrament that many of the Papiſts do of Confeſſion and Abſolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that ſo they may begin to ſin again upon a new ſcore.

But becauſe the Examination of our ſelves is a thing ſo very uſefull, and the time which men are wont to ſet apart for their preparation for the Sacrament is ſo advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend thoſe who take this occaſion to ſearch and try their ways, and to call themſelves to a more ſolemn account of their actions. Becauſe this ought to be done ſometime, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps ſome would never find time to recollect themſelves and to take the condition of their ſouls into ſerious conſideration, were it not upon this ſolemn occaſion.

The ſum of what I have ſaid is this, that ſuppoſing a perſon to be habitually prepared by a religious diſpoſition of mind and the general courſe of a good life, this more ſolemn actual preparation is not always neceſſary: And it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual preparation is, the better. For no man can examine himſelf too often, and underſtand the ſtate of his ſoul too well, and exerciſe repentance, and renew the reſolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the Lord's table, there to commemorate his death and to renew our Covenant with him to live as becomes the Goſpel.

All

All the Reflexion I ſhall now make upon this Diſcourſe, ſhall be from the conſideration of what hath been ſaid earneſtly to excite all that profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians to a due preparation of themſelves for this holy Sacrament, and a frequent participation of it according to the intention of our Lord and Saviour in the inſtitution of it, and the undoubted practice of Chriſtians in the primitive and beſt times, when men had more devotion and fewer ſcruples about their duty.

If we do in good earneſt believe that this Sacrament was inſtituted by our Lord in remembrance of his dying love, we cannot but have a very high value and eſteem for it upon that account. Methinks ſo often as we reade in the inſtitution of it thoſe words of our dear Lord, *doe this in remembrance of me*, and conſider what he who ſaid them did for us, this dying charge of our beſt friend ſhould ſtick with us and make a ſtrong impreſſion upon our minds: Eſpecially if we add to theſe, thoſe other words of his not long before his death, *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend; ye are my friends if you doe whatſoever I command you.* It is a wonderfull love which he hath expreſſed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankfull acknowledgment, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this bleſſed Sacrament. And ſhall this charge, laid upon us by him who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the ſolemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kindneſs which is the fountain of ſo many bleſſings and benefits to us? It is a ſign we have no great ſenſe of the benefit when we are ſo unmindfull of our benefactour as to forget him days

without number. The Obligation he hath laid upon us is ſo vaſtly great, not onely beyond all requital but beyond all expreſſion, that if he had commanded us ſome very grievous thing we ought with all the readineſs and chearfulneſs in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath impoſed upon us ſo eaſie a commandment, a thing of no burthen but of immenſe benefit? when he hath onely ſaid to us, *Eat O friends, and drink O beloved?* when he onely invites us to his table, to the beſt and moſt delicious Feaſt that we can partake of on this ſide heaven?

If we ſeriouſly believe the great bleſſings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we ſhould be ſo far from neglecting them, that we ſhould heartily thank God for every opportunity he offers to us of being made partakers of ſuch benefits. When ſuch a price is put into our hands, ſhall we want hearts to make uſe of it? Methinks we ſhould long with *David* (who ſaw but the ſhadow of theſe bleſſings) to be ſatisfied with the good things of God's houſe, and to draw near his altar; and ſhould cry out with him, *O when ſhall I come and appear before thee! My ſoul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, and my fleſh cryeth out for the living God.* And if we had a juſt eſteem of things, we ſhould account it the greateſt infelicity and judgment in the world to be debarred of this privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our ſelves of.

We exclaim againſt the Church of *Rome* with great impatience, and with a very juſt indignation, for robbing the People of half this bleſſed Sacrament, and taking from them the *cup of bleſſing*, *the cup of ſalvation*; and yet we can patiently endure for ſome months, nay years, to exclude our ſelves wholly from it. If no ſuch great benefits and bleſſings belong to it, why

why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our ſelves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces and our ſlow progreſs and improvement in Chriſtianity, whilſt we wilfully deſpiſe the beſt means of our growth in goodneſs. Well do we deſerve that God ſhould ſend leanneſs into our ſouls, and make them to conſume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God himſelf doth ſpread ſo bountifull a Table for us and ſet before us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulneſs.

THE END.

A Cata-

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